

Letter from Helen Keller to Alexander Graham Bell, June 2, 1899

12 Newbury Street, Boston, June 2, 1899 My dear, dear Dr. Bell;

My teacher and I received the check you sent us two days ago, and I cannot give you any idea how our hearts overflowed with gratitude to you for your thoughtfulness. Words are never warm and tender enough to express one's appreciation of a great kindness. One can only say "thank you," but I say it with all my heart. Not only have you made us both very happy indeed; but you have also enabled us to get away from the heat and fatigue of the city into the beautiful, free country earlier than we could otherwise have done; and you know, I delight in nothing more than in being close to Nature's heart.

We shall be at Wrentham tomorrow afternoon, and we shall stay in the little cottage, which my mother is to occupy this summer. We shall come to Boston several times a week for lessons; but you can think of me as studying merrily under the trees, or on the shore of the lovely lake, which is only a few feet away from the cottage. Then, when my dear ones come, there will be but one drop left to fill my cup to the brim— if it is granted me by fickle Fortune, and that is success in my examinations!

Perhaps you would like to hear something of my work. My Greek progresses finely. I am reading the sixteenth book of the "Iliad," and also the "Odyssey." The "Iliad" is splendid; many of the descriptions are so vivid, one seems to hear the clash of spears and the shouts of the soldiers as they rush into battle. But I think I shall like the "Odyssey" best. The "Iliad" tells of almost nothing but war and the ruin, sorrow and cruelty that follow in its train; but the "Odyssey" tells of nobler courage— the courage of a soul, sore tried, but steadfast to the end. I enjoy Cicero too. His orations are wonderful! but they are very hard to translate, and I feel ashamed sometimes, when I make that eloquent man say what

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sounds absurd or insipid. But how is a school-girl to interpret such genius? Why, I should have to be a Cicero, to talk like Cicero!

Some of my friends tell me that I am very foolish to give so much of my time to Greek and Latin; but I am sure they would not think so, if they knew what a wonderful, beautiful world of thought and experience Homer and Virgil have opened up to me.

I am very sorry indeed that my examinations will prevent me from going to Northampton this summer; but in future years I hope I can attend oftener the meetings of the Association, and do more towards promoting the welfare and happiness of the deaf, in whom I feel deeply interested.

My teacher joins me in sending love to dear Mrs. Bell, and Elsie and Daisy. We wish we did not live so far away; for then we could see more of you. With much love, and best wishes for a pleasant, restful summer, I am,

Affectionately your friend, Helen Keller.

Helen Keller